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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003236

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/I. NSC FOR PHEE AND VROOMAN.  
OSD FOR HABER AND EL-GAMAL.

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TAGS: [IR](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: MEK/ASHRAF: NO VIOLENCE, NO MEK DEPARTURES ON  
GOI'S DECEMBER 15 "SOFT MOVE" AT ASHRAF

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3206

[B](#). BAGHDAD 3188

[C](#). BAGHDAD 3143

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Gary A. Grappo for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) SUMMARY: The move to voluntarily relocate MEK residents at Ashraf on December 15 passed without incident and with minimal interaction between MEK members and GOI forces. A GOI convoy of 22 vehicles, with five passenger buses was observed entering Ashraf accompanied by a combined force of 30-40 Iraqi soldiers and riot control police. GOI officials met with MEK leadership inside Ashraf, after which the convoy slowly toured the camp, with international media in tow, using loudspeakers to enjoin Ashraf residents to depart voluntarily. No Ashraf residents were visible during the event, and none departed on the GOI buses. There were no USG personnel present at Ashraf during the event, which lasted approximately four hours. END SUMMARY.

MEK OPEN CAMP FOR GOI

2.(C) The December 15 "soft move" of MEK members at Ashraf a.k.a. Camp New Iraq) ultimately proved to be a non-event, with no violence, only one visible protest, and no MEK members volunteering to depart Ashraf. The previous evening, MEK personnel removed barricades at the main entrance to Ashraf (Lion's Gate), and opened Lion's Gate to allow vehicle traffic. Iraqi Police (IP) was allowed to travel in and out of Ashraf through the gate, beginning the evening of December 14. According to GOI officials, the Commander of the Iraqi Army (IA) 3rd Battalion, LTC Latif, informed MEK leaders the previous evening that the GOI Ashraf committee wanted to meet with them. Latif also briefed MNFI the same evening, explaining that an Iraqi Army (IA) platoon of 30-40 soldiers would accompany the committee for protection and an IA quick reaction force would also be ready to respond if the situation got out of control.

3.(C) On December 15 at 1135, a combined force of 30-40 Iraqi Army and riot control police arrived at Ashraf in a convoy of 22 vehicles. Despite GOI assertions on December 13 that they had "no plans" to enter the camp, the convoy entered through Lion's Gate, proceeding to the Iraqi Police Headquarters on Ashraf, where they met with MEK leaders. Embassy and MNFI remotely observed a convoy that included only five passenger buses; however, GOI Ashraf committee officials told Embaffs later that there were two convoys, each with five buses. No Embassy or MNFI personnel were present at Ashraf; MNFI forces were pulled into MNFI's Forward Operating Base (FOB) Grizzly.

#### GOI HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE

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4.(C) GOI representatives had requested both MNFI and UNAMI presence at a press conference but UNAMI observers remained at FOB Grizzly, declining to travel to Ashraf without MNFI protection. According to GOI officials, approximately 30 representatives of the international press were present, and GOI officials held a press conference at the Iraqi Police Headquarters. GOI officials said that some MEK members approached the press, and GOI made no move to prevent them. GOI officials also stated that there were several small, peaceful protests by MEK members, who carried anti-GOI and anti-Iran placards; however, Embassy was able to confirm only Qanti-Iran placards; however, Embassy was able to confirm only one small protest. In addition to international press, a representative from the Ministry of Human Rights attended, according to a GOI Ashraf committee official.

#### NOBODY BOARDS THE BUSES

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5.(C) Following the GOI meeting with the MEK, the convoy slowly toured the camp, driving past the housing units and enjoining MEK members via loudspeaker to voluntarily depart Ashraf. According to the GOI, they also left leaflets in various locations across the camp that explained GOI assurances to treat MEK members peacefully and humanely, and they observed some MEK members picking up the leaflets. Ultimately, no MEK members chose to depart, and the convoy exited the camp via Lion's Gate. The entire event lasted approximately four hours.

#### COMMENT

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6.(C) The "soft move" appeared to be an orchestrated show by the GOI, which seemed eager for international observers and media to be present. The Maliki government may now feel that it has proven its reasonableness by attempting a voluntary relocation, which was unsuccessful, and can proceed to stronger measures in the future. Embassy will seek to ascertain what the next steps might be in the GOI plan for the MEK and reiterate the USG's stance that the GOI continue to seek a non-violent, voluntary solution to the problem.

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